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The primary objective of this program has been to demonstrate the effectiveness of introducing certain language concepts in kindergarten which are not normally included at that level. Special efforts were given to making the children aware of their speech habits, letters, words, and sentences. Visual and auditory discrimination skills were emphasized.

The evaluation effort was to ascertain the effects of this augmented program of language awareness in the kindergarten on the reading readiness of the children involved. This was determined through the Lee-Clark Reading-Readiness Test and teacher ratings of readiness. The five sections of kindergarten were not significantly different in age or ability. The test was administered and teachers rated each child on an eight-point scale from poor to excellent expectancy of success in learning to read. The mean score on the Reading Readiness test for the group within the program was within the "high" success expectancy category, and the average for the entire group was in the range "high average" success expectancy; the difference between means was statistically significant. The mean difference of teacher ratings failed to meet the requirement of statistical significance; however, the language awareness group scored higher.

Although this study was limited, the magnitude of superiority of the language awareness group on the Lee-Clark test is impressive, and strongly suggests that the introduction of a language awareness program in kindergarten level may be effective in promoting readiness for learning.

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REPORT OF EVALUATION OF KINDERGARTEN LANGUAGE AWARENESS PROGRAM AT STONEHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this program has been to demonstrate the effectiveness of introducing certain language concepts at kindergarten which are not normally included at that level. This program, which is part of the total Interagency Reading and Language Development Program in the Project elementary schools, is based on an interest in maximizing the acquisition of language skills in the early grades and in establishing the readiness for, or the foundation for, beginning to learn to read.

Although formal reading instruction, per se, was not begun with these kindergartners, special efforts were given to making the children aware of their speech habits, letters, words, and sentences. Activities included simple class newspapers, word games, simple stories, and listening to interesting speech patterns. Visual and auditory discrimination skills were emphasized. Children were encouraged to be aware of spacial placements and letter configurations. Training in sound discrimination as a foundation for later formal phonics training was emphasized, also.

II. PROBLEM

The purpose of the present limited evaluation effort is to ascertain the effects of this augmented program of language awareness in the kindergarten on the reading readiness of the children involved. The question which might be -- Did children in the augmented language awareness program score significantly better on the reading readiness test and in teacher ratings of readiness than comparable children in other classes?

III. METHOD

There were five kindergarten groups at Stonehurst during the 1963-64 school year. Two full time and one half time kindergarten teachers had groups of

approximately the same size. In the fall, kindergarteners were generally assigned to one or another class on a random basis. Especially young or old new enrollees were kept somewhat in clusters. As will be seen in the table which follows, the experimental group had an age distribution which was similar to the total kindergarten group as a whole. No ability measures are available on these kindergarteners, but as far as the investigator could determine the experimental language awareness group was not a selected group. There is no evidence that "better" or "more mature" children were systematically placed in this or any of the other classes.

The Lee Clark Reading Readiness Test was administered to all five sections of the kindergarten at Stonehurst in May 1964. In all instances the regular classroom teachers did the testing. The Lee Clark Reading Readiness Test samples certain perceptual and conceptual skills which have been found prerequisite to readiness to learn to read.

In April teachers at Stonehurst kindergarten program were asked to rate their students on an eight point scale on expectancy of success in learning to read in first grade (see attachment #1). These ratings fell into four expectancy categories - "excellent", "good", "poor". Two numerical ratings were included in each of the categories. In this way the "poor" category had values of one and two, "fair" - three and four, "good" - five and six, "excellent" - seven and eight.

IV. RESULTS

It can be seen on the accompanying table #1 that this augmented language awareness class closely approximates the age distribution for the whole kindergarten in mean score. There is somewhat more variability indicated by the standard deviation. The purpose of showing this is to establish that this group

was not greatly older or younger than the rest of the classes as a whole. It might be expected that if the class had been significantly older that they could be expected to be more ready to learn to read. This was not the case however since the mean difference was only .9 months and yielded a non-significant critical ratio of 1.63.

TABLE I - CHRONOLOGICAL AGE, READING READINESS SCORES, AND TEACHERS' RATINGS ON KINDERGARTENERS AT STONEHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	KINDERGARTENERS IN PROJECT LANGUAGE AWARENESS PROGRAM			ALL KINDERGARTENERS IN STONEHURST			DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS	CRITICAL RATIO
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.		
CHRONOLOGICAL AGE (Months) (Determined May, 1964)	25	61.9	3.5	113	71.0	2.0	0.9	1.63
LEE-CLARK READING READINESS TEST RAW SCORE (May, 1964)	25	53.3	5.8	113	46.6	10.4	6.7	2.77
TEACHERS' RATINGS OF CHILDREN EXPECTANCY OF SUCCESS IN LEARNING TO READ IN GRADE I	26	5.12	3.58	129	4.87	1.44	0.25	0.30

The mean Lee-Clark raw score of 53.3 for the augmented class yields a grade equivalent score of 1.6. This mean score is within the "high" success expectancy category. The kindergarten class as a whole had a mean score of 46.6. The grade equivalent was correspondingly of 1.0. This places the mean of this group in the middle range of the scores designated as the "high average" success expectancy category.

The 6.7 difference between means is statistically significant as revealed by a critical ratio of 2.77. This critical ratio indicates that differences of this magnitude might be obtained by chance only once in a hundred such investigations.

Approximately 70% of the kindergarten class scored on the high average or high rating categories. This is of particular significance. An indication is

given that children in the school are on the whole entering first grade with a good expectancy of success in reading.

An analysis of the teacher ratings of expectancy success in learning to read in first grade indicates a mean of 5.12 for the language awareness group and 4.87 for the kindergarten as a whole. The mean difference of 0.25 fails to meet the requirement of statistical or practical significance but does follow the trend established by the reading readiness test scores. The numerical values of these means fall within the good expectancy category as was the case with the test scores.

IV. DISCUSSION

The design and comparisons in this evaluation study are limited. However, the magnitude of superiority of the language awareness group on the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test is impressive. More comprehensive test information might give a more reliable demonstration of any superiority which may exist. This evidence forms only a partial foundation for establishing experimental program superiority. It would be highly desirable to instrument a replication of this program with a more elaborate sampling design and/or provision for comparison groups.

A serious limitation to this evaluation is the fact that although the program itself was intended to augment the development of children's total language patterns and skills our present evaluation was limited to a single test of reading readiness and a global teacher rating.

V. CONCLUSION

There is a strong suggestion that introduction of a language awareness program in kindergarten level may be effective in promoting readiness for learning to read in first grade. This conclusion is predicated on the predictive validity of the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test.

RATING SCALE OF READINESS FOR BEGINNING INSTRUCTION IN READING

Various experiences are provided in kindergarten which are aimed at developing readiness for beginning formal reading instruction in the first grade. At the time children enter first grade we know that some may be reading already; some are just then ready to begin to learn to read; and others may need additional experiences and/or time to mature sufficiently before beginning formal instruction.

On the basis of the information you have from your contacts with and observations of the children in your class will you please indicate your estimation of how successful you expect each child to be in learning to read in the first grade. The ratings range from an "excellent expectancy" of success to a "poor expectancy" of success. Please circle a number to indicate your rating.

NAMES	Excellent Expectancy		Good Expectancy		Fair Expectancy		Poor Expectancy	
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1